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What is claimed is:

1. A workflow server which is connected to a plurality of client terminals for processing an electronic work item and which transfers a work item generated or processed at each of the client terminals to a next user in charge in accordance with a prespecified process flow, comprising:

a controller for allowing, (with respect to at least one work item,) both a user in charge to whom the work item is transferred and a substitute user predesignated by the user in charge every process to access the work item and directly or indirectly transferring the work item processed by either user to the next user in charge.

2. A workflow server according to claim 1, further comprising means for displaying, in response to a request from any one of the client terminals, a list of users who are designating the user of the request source client terminal as a substitute on the client terminal.

3. A workflow server according to claim 1, further comprising a user management table linked to management information for each of the users of the client terminals, for storing information regarding a substitute user designated by the user in association with each process,

wherein when any of the client terminals specifies a user serving as a user in charge and requests display of a work item to be performed by a substitute user, said controller checks qualifications of the user of the request source client terminal for a substitute user by referring to the user management table corresponding to the user in charge and specifies work items to be performed by the substitute user and to be displayed.

4. A workflow server which is connected to a plurality of client terminals and which transfers a work item generated or processed by each of the client terminals to a next user in charge in accordance with a prespecified process flow, comprising:

a user information memory for storing a list of work items transferred to the user and identification information of a substitute user designated for each process by the user in association with identification information of each of the users of the client terminals,

wherein when a request of start of the substitution process with respect to a work item received by another user is sent from a user except for the destination of the work item, the information stored in the user information memory corresponding to the another user is referred to, the



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specifying, when a user in charge is designated by the request source user, work items which can be processed by the request source user instead of the user in charge by referring to information stored in the user information memory corresponding to the designated user in charge after checking the qualifications of the request source user for working as a substitute user.

6. A workflow server according to claim 4, wherein the user information memory stores at least one of power of substitute, substitution conditions, and substitution effective term besides identification information of the substitute user designated by each user for each process, and

said controller checks whether the identification information of the user has been registered in advance or not and at least one of the power of substitute, substitution conditions, and substitution effective term at the time of checking qualifications of the request source user.

7. A workflow server which is connected to a plurality of client terminals and which transfers a work item generated or processed at each of the client terminals to a next user in charge in accordance with a prespecified process flow,

comprising:

a process management table defining the relation between an identifier of each of nodes constructing a business process and a destination of a work item in  
5 correspondence with a business identifier;

a user management table for storing, in correspondence with an identifier of a user who operates the client terminal, an identifier of an unprocessed work item, an identifier of a substitute user designated by the user for each work,  
10 and an identifier of a user in charge indicative of another user who designates the client terminal user as a substitute;

a work item management table for storing, in correspondence with a work item identifier, an identifier of a business process to which the work item belongs and  
15 an identifier of a node indicating the present position of the work item; and

a controller for allowing both the user in charge who has not yet processed a work item in the user management table and a substitute user registered as a substitute in  
20 correspondence with the business process identifier of the work item in the user management table of the user in charge to process the work item, specifying a next node identifier and a destination user from the process management table in accordance with the business process identifier of the

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work item and the identifier of the node in the present position with respect to the work item processed by each of the client terminals, registering the work item as an unprocessed work item in another user management table  
5 corresponding to the destination user, and updating the identifier of the node indicative of the present position to the identifier of the next node in the work item management table corresponding to the work item.

10 8. A workflow server according to claim 1, further comprising means for transmitting a message for reminding the process of the work item to be urgently processed to, at least one of the client terminal operated by the user in charge as a destination of the work item and a client  
15 terminal operated by the substitute user designated as a substitute of the work item.

9. A method of controlling a workflow system including a plurality of client terminals and a workflow server for  
20 transferring a work item in a process generated or processed by any of the client terminals to a next user in charge in accordance with a predesignated process flow, the method comprising the steps of:

requesting from one of said client terminals to said

to display a work item to be processed by a user by specifying a user in charge of the work item by the workflow server an unprocessed work item to be processed by a user of the system as the substitute user among the users of the system other than the user in charge; and displaying the selected work item on a client terminal of the request source client terminal.

of controlling a workflow system by a workflow server, the method comprising: receiving a request from a client terminal to process a work item generated or processed by the workflow server; transmitting the work item to the next user in charge of the work item designated process flow, the method comprising: selecting, by said workflow server, when a work item is issued from a user in charge, at least one of users of the system other than the user in charge, at least one of users of the system other than the user of the request source client terminal; and displaying the work item on the request source client terminal, on the basis of management information of users of the client terminal.

g by said workflow server, when a work item is issued from a user in charge, at least one of users of the system other than the user of the request source client terminal; and displaying the work item on the request source client terminal, on the basis of management information of users of the client terminal.

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of the request source client terminal.

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selecting by said workflow server, when the client

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